

Sonny Perdue  
GOVERNOR



Timothy A. Connell  
PRESIDENT

July 16, 2008

RE: Implementation of Legislative and Regulatory Changes to State Programs

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to provide the following implementation guidance related to legislative and regulatory changes to various State programs administered by Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC). This letter and the attached Administrative Policies address the following changes:

- The new Georgia residency requirement for the HOPE Scholarship Program.
- When college degree credit hours attempted prior to high school graduation should be counted as Attempted-Hours.
- When technical certificate/diploma credit hours taken prior to high school graduation should not be counted as Paid-Hours.
- How the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile ranking on the SAT or ACT test will be implemented for HOPE Scholarship eligibility.
- When the new provisions for the HERO Scholarship Program are applicable.
- The effective date for the increased funding levels for the Tuition Equalization Grant, HOPE Scholarship for private institutions and Accel Program.

The Administrative Policies document provides a brief description of each legislative or regulatory change and how and when those changes will be implemented. Please review the policies and contact us at [ProgramAdmin@gsfc.org](mailto:ProgramAdmin@gsfc.org) or 800-414-3080 if you have any questions. In the coming weeks we plan to post questions we've received from you under the College Administrators link on the GAcademy411 website.

Sincerely,



Timothy A. Connell

Enclosure



**GSFC ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES  
AS A RESULT OF 2008 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY CHANGES**  
July 16, 2008

1. LEGISLATIVE CHANGE:

Senate Bill (SB) 492 increases the Georgia residency requirement for the HOPE Scholarship Program from 12 months to 24 months for students who were not Georgia residents at the time of their high school graduation.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY:

This provision applies to all students who graduate from high school **on or after July 1, 2008**.

- Students who graduated from high school **on or after July 1, 2008**, and who were not Georgia residents on the day of their high school graduation, must meet the Georgia residency requirements for 24 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which HOPE Scholarship payment is sought.
- Students who graduated from high school **on or after July 1, 2008**, and who **were** Georgia residents on the day of their high school graduation are required to meet the Georgia residency requirements for 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which HOPE Scholarship payment is sought.
- Students who graduated from high school **prior to July 1, 2008**, regardless of their residency status at the time of their high school graduation, are required to meet the Georgia residency requirements for 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which HOPE Scholarship payment is sought.

The citizenship requirements for the HOPE Scholarship will continue to be set at 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which HOPE Scholarship payment is sought.

2. LEGISLATIVE CHANGE:

SB 492 requires that college degree credit hours attempted prior to high school graduation be counted as HOPE Scholarship Attempted-Hours, if the student does not meet the academic requirements to be a HOPE Scholar upon graduation, and if his or her college accepts those credit hours.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY:

This provision applies to any college degree credit (joint enrollment, dual enrollment, Accel, AP, or IB) coursework taken during any school term that **began on or after July 1, 2008**, if the student does not graduate as a HOPE Scholar and the college accepts such hours.

- High school students who take college degree credit coursework during a school term that **began on or after July 1, 2008**, **must** have those hours counted as Attempted-Hours, if they do **not** graduate as HOPE Scholars and their college accepts those hours.
- High school students who took college degree credit coursework during a school term that **began prior to July 1, 2008**, **cannot** have those hours counted as Attempted-Hours.

- High school students who take college degree credit coursework, and who graduate as HOPE Scholars, **cannot** have those hours counted as Attempted-Hours.

Hours taken prior to high school graduation that are not college degree credit hours (HOPE Grant hours), but that are later accepted into a college degree program by a postsecondary institution will **not** count as Attempted-Hours under this provision.

It is recognized that some students who earn college degree credit, which is counted as HOPE Scholarship Attempted-Hours per SB 492, will not have a postsecondary cumulative GPA upon reaching a required checkpoint. In those instances, the student may file a request for an Exception under Guideline A2, of the HOPE Scholarship Regulations, which allows for an Exception when the student has at least a 3.0 postsecondary cumulative GPA after attempting 12 hours of coursework.

3. LEGISLATIVE CHANGE:

As a result of SB 492, technical certificate/diploma credit hours attempted by high school students participating in Dual Credit Enrollment, for which HOPE Grant payment was made, are not to be counted as Paid-Hours for purposes of the HOPE Grant Paid-Hours limit or the HOPE Scholarship Combined Paid-Hours limit.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY:

This provision applies to any Dual Credit Enrollment hours taken by a high school student during a school term that **began on or after July 1, 2008**, for which HOPE Grant payment was received.

Beginning with any school term that **started on or after July 1, 2008**, TCSG and USG institutions should identify Dual Credit Enrollment students, and the corresponding hours, as part of the HOPE Grant invoicing process. These credit hours will **not** be added to the students' records as Paid-Hours on the GSFC system. This provision will **not** result in adjustments to students' Paid-Hours records for school terms that **began prior to July 1, 2008**, nor provide for retroactive HOPE Grant or HOPE Scholarship payment for award years previous to the 2008-2009 award year.

If the Dual Credit Enrollment hours (technical certificate/diploma coursework), for which a student receives HOPE Grant payment, are later accepted by a college as credit toward a degree, such hours will continue to **not** be counted as Paid-Hours.

4. LEGISLATIVE CHANGE:

House Bill (HB) 152 provides HOPE Scholarship eligibility at the college freshman (First-Tier) level for students who score in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher nationally on the SAT or ACT, but only if such students received a GED after June 30, 1993, graduated from a high school ineligible for HOPE, or completed a home study program that is not accredited by a HOPE-eligible agency.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY:

This provision applies to any school term that **began on or after May 13, 2008**, the date HB 152 became effective. Students who would have been eligible for HOPE Scholarship payment, had this provision been in effect, for a school term(s) that started prior to May 13, 2008 are **ineligible** for retroactive HOPE Scholarship payment for such term(s). This means that a school term that started on or after May 13, 2008 is the first school term for which a student could receive HOPE Scholarship payment, as a result of this provision.

A student who: (1) earned a GED prior to May 13, 2008, or (2) graduated from an ineligible high school prior to May 13, 2008, or (3) completed a home study program that is not accredited by a HOPE-eligible agency prior to May 13, 2008, may receive HOPE Scholarship

payment for a school term that started on or after May 13, 2008, if, during a single test administration of the SAT or ACT, such student scored in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher nationally on each component (e.g., math) of the exam. However, such student **cannot** receive payment for school terms that started prior to May 13, 2008.

This provision only applies to college freshmen (First-Tier) students who have not yet reached the HOPE Scholarship checkpoint of 30 semester or 45 quarter hours.

In addition, GSFC will determine whether or not students meet the 85th percentile requirement. In order to make that determination, students will be required to have the appropriate testing service send their test scores directly to GSFC for evaluation.

5. LEGISLATIVE CHANGE:

HB 311 expanded the eligibility criteria for the Georgia HERO Scholarship Program by:

- Moving the beginning Deployment Date from May 3, 2005 to February 1, 2003,
- Broadening the Qualifying Term of Service from 181 consecutive days to 181 cumulative days, and
- Provided eligibility for spouses of military members who are 100% disabled as a result of service in a combat zone.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY:

These provisions apply to any school term that **began on or after July 1, 2008**. This means that a school term that began on or after July 1, 2008 is the first school term for which a student could receive HERO payment, as a result of these three changes. However, the occurrence or event, that now makes a student eligible for HERO, may have taken place prior to July 1, 2008, but such student cannot receive retroactive HERO payment for the 2007-2008 award year or prior award years.

6. LEGISLATIVE CHANGE:

HB 990 (State Fiscal Year [SFY] 2009 Appropriations Act) increased HOPE Scholarship funding for students attending private colleges from \$3,000 per academic year to \$3,500, and Tuition Equalization Grant awards from \$1,100 to \$1,200 per academic year. For consistency with the HOPE Scholarship Program, the Accel Program award amount for students attending private colleges was also increased from \$3,000 per academic year to \$3,500 per academic year.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY:

HOPE Scholarship and Accel Program awards for private college students and Tuition Equalization Grant awards **paid** by GSFC **on or after July 1, 2008** for the 2008-2009 award year (FY 09) shall be at the higher amounts.